The Portsmouth Papers

Published by Portsmouth City Council
Civic Offices
Guildhall Square
Portsmouth PO1 2AL

No. 39 December 1983
Price 75p

39

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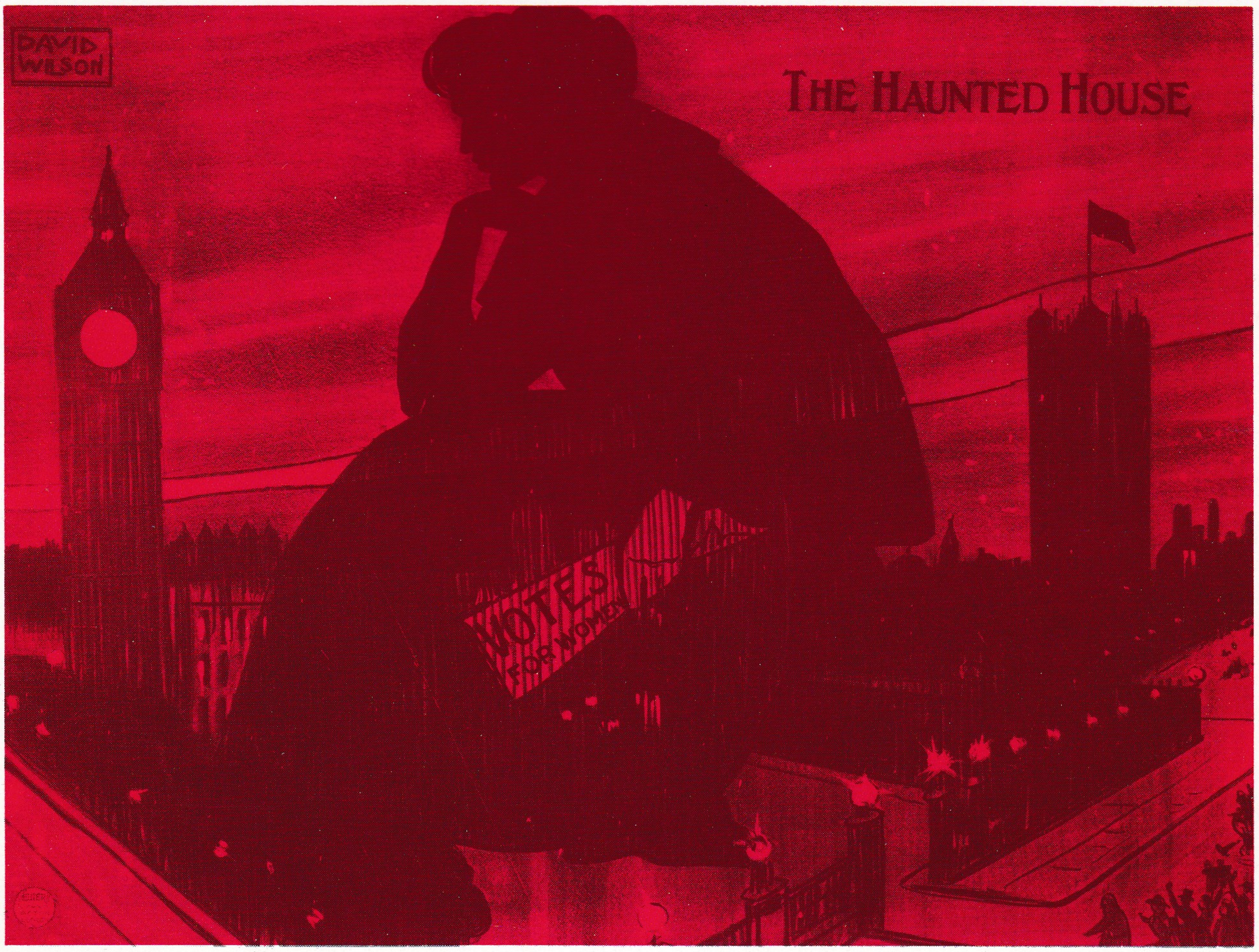

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The PORTSMOUTH PAPERS *are published under the auspices of the Libraries, Museums and Arts Historical Publications Sub-Committee of the Portsmouth City Council, Civic Offices, Guildhall Square, Portsmouth, PO1 2AL*

Issue Number 39 December 1983

ISBN 0 901559 58 X

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Printed by Eyre & Spottiswoode Limited at Grosvenor Press Portsmouth

VOTES FOR WOMEN: THE WOMEN'S FIGHT IN PORTSMOUTH

Sarah Peacock

'Stick to socks and avoid sociology, and look after your husband before and after annexation'. That, said Victor Grayson[1] in 1910 in Portsmouth Town Hall, was what politicians were expecting women to do. They also said to women

> If you enter the realm of politics, you will see a tremendous amount of apostasy and degradation. You should therefore stand aside from the jungle and noise, for your spirit is too kind and beautiful and sensitive for this kind of thing . . . It is a dirty business. It will pollute you . . . There was also the implication that woman was an inferior creature, who understood not philosophy, but the making of a dumpling, an implication cast by man who failed to realise that George Eliot had no vote but her butler had.[2]

It was an attitude of mind, he contended, which women could not be expected to tolerate. This study looks at the efforts of local women to change these attitudes. It is the story of the women's fight for the vote in the Portsmouth area and its distinguishing features. Little work has been done on the suffrage movement in the regions. The story, so far, has been very much the history of the Pankhurst family[3] from their arrival in London in 1906 with the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) formed three years before. Few people today appreciate that the WSPU, the militant organisation, was only part of the story. There was another, larger, autonomous organisation: the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), formed in 1897 and led by Mrs Millicent Fawcett.[4] This was the non-militant organisation seeking the parliamentary franchise for women. Both these national bodies had regional organisations as did a myriad of other suffrage and anti-suffrage organisations.

Women's suffrage was not a new issue in 1910. As far back as 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft had published her *Vindication of the Rights of Women* and in 1847 a Mrs Anne Knight, a Quaker, published the first female suffrage pamphlet. A Sheffield Association for Female Suffrage was formed in 1851 and produced a suffrage petition which Lord Carlisle presented to the House of Lords. However the real history of the movement began in 1865 when the Kensington Society was formed. This was a discussion group of London women interested in higher education. J. S. Mill, the Member of Parliament for Westminster, presented in the House of Commons in 1866 a suffrage petition with 1400 signatures drafted by three members of the Kensington Society. The petition was the first of its kind and asked for the enfranchisement of 'all householders, without distinction of sex who possess such property or rental qualification as your Honourable House may determine'. Nothing came of the petition. Mill tried again in 1867 when Disraeli introduced his franchise reform bill. He attempted to remove the word 'man' from the text of the bill and insert 'person'. The amendment was lost by 193 votes to 73 votes and female suffrage hopes were dashed for the moment, but this small impetus was sufficient to launch an organisation. The London National Society for Women's Suffrage was formed out of the Kensington Society on 5 July 1867. The Manchester Women's Suffrage Committee, formed the previous year, became the Manchester National Society for Women's Suffrage in August and in November the two groups, with a newly formed Edinburgh committee, came together in a loose federation: the National Society for Women's Suffrage.

Many factors were now combining to make women's suffrage a topical issue. For many women, the suffrage campaign began as a reaction against the manifest lack of opportunities for unmarried, middle-class women. Traditionally, mid-Victorian women of the middle- and upper-classes were not expected to earn their own livings. They were supposed to remain forever dependent on men and their whole education and upbringing was geared to a future life as a wife and mother. Such women were dependent financially on men because until the passage of the Married Women's Property Acts of 1870, 1874 and 1882, married women were not able to own property in their own right. Nor were they able to do anything about this state of affairs since they could not vote in parliamentary elections.

This male-determined role pre-supposed, of course, that all women had husbands but this was far from the case. Of 10,380,258 women of all ages resident in England and Wales in 1861, there were 1,537,314 unmarried women aged 20 and over and 756,438 widows aged 20 and over. Amongst these two million or more adult women were working-class women with employment but there were also large numbers of middle- and upper-class women without adequate career opportunities. Barred by their sex from the professions and the world of business, one of the few careers open to them was that of governess which as Charlotte Brontë's heroine, Jane Eyre, discovered, had the marked disadvantages of poor pay and ambivalent social position.

Many middle-class women were better educated by the end of the nineteenth century and therefore less willing to accept the fact that they did not have the vote. It is true

What a Woman may be . . . poster. Museum of London.

that for much of the century education for middle-class girls was the means by which they acquired social rather than intellectual skills but change was under way by mid-century. The Reverend Frederick Denison Maurice, Professor of English at King's College, London opened a college in London to improve the standard of education of governesses in 1848, and within six months another college for women was opened: the Ladies College, Bedford Square or Bedford College as it became known with its broader aim of educating women who wanted higher education. Women emerged from these colleges determined to change the structure of schooling for middle-class girls and the 1850s saw the establishment of the North London Collegiate School for Girls and Cheltenham Ladies' College. The same decade also saw the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge establish the university local examinations. Originally open only to schoolboys, it was felt by many people that girls should be able to compete too. With the support of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science which was founded in 1857, Emily Davies[5] persuaded the Cambridge local examination syndicate to allow women to take the examinations on a trial basis. The arrangement became permanent in 1867. Women were now striving hard to improve themselves. They helped popularise the university extension programme in which lecture series were followed by brief examinations and students received a certificate to the effect that they had reached the standard expected of them.

The Girls' Public Day School Company, later to be known as the Girls' Public Day School Trust, was set up in 1872 with the aim of establishing a number of girls' schools across the country with the same standards and proficiency. The same subjects would be offered as in boys' schools and girls would be expected to undertake a full timetable and prepare for the university local examinations or London matriculation. By 1900 there were thirty-six such schools established with a combined total of some seven thousand pupils. The logical extension of this movement was higher education for women. Emily Davies established her college for women in 1869 at Hitchin in Hertfordshire which later moved to Girton near Cambridge. Here, women were expected to undertake the same college courses as men and complete them in the same time. Other colleges for women followed: Newnham, Cambridge (1871), Somerville and Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford (1879) and the Royal Holloway College, London (1886). Few women graduates had made many inroads into those professional circles, hitherto the exclusive preserve of the male sex, by the end of the century but they would now question far more authoritatively the reasons for their exclusion and the fact that they were barred by their sex from voting in parliamentary elections.

Other women were inspired to enter the political arena for entirely different reasons. Mrs Pankhurst was a case in point. Distressed by the conditions of the women cotton operatives in Manchester, she emerged from mourning her husband's death determined to form an organisation to carry on political and social work on behalf of working-class women.

The different strands of the movement for women's suffrage came together in Portsmouth. Women had played a significant role in the economic life of the town throughout the nineteenth century. Between 1841 and 1901, as dressmakers, seamstresses and staymakers, they accounted for between 21 per cent and 33 per cent of the town's industrial employment. There was of course a large available female labour force: the wives of dockyard workers, naval men and soldiers on foreign service. Dockyard wages were low and work fluctuated depending on whether England was at war or enjoying a period of peace. Sailors' pay was invariably far too little to keep a family, and such families were especially vulnerable when naval disasters occurred as there was little provision for sailors' widows. The wives of soldiers on foreign service often needed to supplement their incomes too.

Such a preponderance of surplus labour created its own problems. Where there were more workers than jobs, it was possible to keep wages down in the town, which was described at an organising meeting of the Tailors' Union in the Lower Albert Hall[6] in December 1913 as 'the worst sweated town in the three kingdoms'. The speaker, Mr. Rowlerson, London organiser of the union, continued:

> . . . His Union had determined to spend some money and energy in Portsmouth in the New Year. They were anxious to avoid trouble of any kind, but the condition of affairs in the tailoring trade in Portsmouth must cease. Girls of 16 and 17 years of age worked from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. for sums ranging from 1*s.* 6*d.* per week upwards. If our English Officers knew of some of the conditions their uniforms were made under he very much questioned whether they would ever wear them. The Trades Board Act in the tailoring trade gave a minimum wage of 13*s.* 6*d.* for girls over 18 for ordinary work. Yet girls employed in Portsmouth on some of the very best work were receiving less than half the sum laid down by the Trades Board Act. His Union meant to put up a fight to improve the conditions of the workers in Portsmouth.[7]

On the eve of the 1914–18 War, local suffrage societies were much preoccupied with these matters. A meeting of representatives from twenty-two societies, organisations

and religious denominations took place at Madden's Hotel[8] in July 1914 to consider the possibility of holding a big protest meeting against alleged 'sweating' of Portsmouth female employees. The local branch of the NUWSS agreed to hold an anti-sweating exhibition in the town in October. The Fabian Society suggested that the occasion of the exhibition might also be a suitable opportunity for protesting not only against low pay but also against the circumstances under which many women tried to get an honest living in the town.[9]

These were not new problems. Almost half a century earlier, a lively editorial in the *Hampshire Telegraph* had animadverted upon the issue of shirts and stays:

> An enormous quantity of these articles are made in the two parishes of Portsmouth and Portsea, to the manifest detriment of the poor-rates and the morals of the females employed, and which detriment and demoralisation arise from the infamous and unjustly low prices given for the work performed; the best workers cannot obtain two shillings a week, though they work early and late; and the fact will scarcely be credited that a dozen of seamen's shirts are made for ten-pence! and even this price has been known to be witheld on the alledgment that the work is bad; a better article called yacht shirts with full bosoms and stitched collars and cuffs, are made at 2*s*. 4*d*. per dozen. At these prices the wretched females cannot earn more than two-pence a day . . .[10]

Outside the dress trades, the other largest single group of working women were, of course, domestic servants:

	Domestic Servants	Teachers	Total female working population
1841	1977	133	4297
1901	9354	988	22342

(*Census Reports*, Occupation Tables)

A small number of women were employed as school teachers but they never represented more than a small proportion of the female working population. A few women were employed in clerical positions by the turn of the century but the bulk of women in Portsmouth were, in the words of the 1901 census, 'without specified occupations or unoccupied'.

	Occupied unoccupied	Retired or unoccupied	Total
1841	4297	24153	28450
1901	22342	55419	77761[11]

(*Census Reports*, Occupation Tables)

Although these women were not forced to earn their own livings, they were not inactive. They busied themselves with numerous local organisations and charities and the women's auxiliaries of the main political parties, founded between 1885 and 1888, diverted the talents of the more energetic ladies. Interestingly, the Primrose League was founded by Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, Member of Par-

liament for Portsmouth 1880–85 and one of the members of the 'Fourth Party'.[12] Founded in 1881, the Primrose League was devoted to 'the maintenance of religion, of the estates of the realm, and of the Imperial ascendancy of the British Empire'.[13] By 1886 the *Hampshire Telegraph* was passing comment on the activities of 'the enthusiastic matrons of the Bruce Habitation of the Primrose League' during local council elections.[14]

Of course, qualified rate-paying spinsters had been permitted to vote in borough elections since 1869 and in county council elections from 1888. There were in fact 2,705 such women entitled to vote in Portsmouth according to a Home Office return made in August 1889[15] and these existing local franchises were extended to married women in 1894. It is worth noting, though, that in 1911 the mayor of Portsmouth, Sir Scott Foster, referring to the activities of militant suffragists at the Cornishmen's annual dinner, said that 'it was a regrettable fact that although ladies had the vote in Portsmouth elections, very few took the trouble to exercise that vote . . . if they would exercise their right to vote, he felt that the public life of Portsmouth would be better and purer . . .'.[16]

This dereliction of duty by the qualified rate-paying spinsters and married women of Portsmouth, if true, is surprising for the minutes of the local branch of the National Union of Teachers, Co-operative Congress Handbooks, diaries and local newspapers indicate that equal pay, adult suffrage and, in particular, the results of women not having the parliamentary vote, were local issues. A meeting organised by the NUWSS at Cosham in January 1909 demonstrates this clearly. The speaker, a Mrs Harrison Bell, BA, took as her subject, 'The Industrial Position of Women'. She pointed to the many ways in which the granting of the franchise to women would affect their position in the industrial world. If women had the power of the vote behind them, she told her audience, they could do much to obtain from employers better and fairer wages. Women's votes would influence legislation affecting children and the home, housing, medical inspection and feeding of children. It was absolutely necessary, she continued, for the protection of the poorer classes of women, both in the industrial world and in the home, that the franchise should be extended to women on the same conditions as it was given to men.[17]

At a meeting of the Portsmouth branch of the WSPU in January 1910 chaired by Miss Peacock, the speaker, a Miss Carey of London, widened the debate further. She pointed to the injustice of women having to stand helplessly in the background

> when there were so many important questions before the country, a large proportion of which materially affected women's interests. A wealthy woman who owned houses and land, who employed servants and work people was yet debarred, merely because of her sex, from having any say by way of a vote, in the political questions which were so vital to her interests.[18]

Frederick Pethick-Lawrence,[19] speaking at another meeting organised by the WSPU, this time in November 1911, raised the debate onto an even more elevated plane. 'It is fighting', he said, 'for the dignity of your own souls, it is fighting for the right to have an opinion which is not a subordinate opinion, that is fighting for the right to stand on a footing of equality with the other half of the human race'. He sat down to rapturous applause.[20]

Finally, it must be noted that by the end of the nineteenth century provision for the education of women in Portsmouth had improved hugely, just as it had done in the country at large. The Portsmouth High School, founded in 1882, was one of the schools of the Girls' Public Day School Trust. Pupils were prepared successfully for the examinations of the Joint Board of Oxford and Cambridge, for London Matriculation and for scholarships to the universities. 'Byculla' School in Merton Road, 'Upper Mount' School in Clarendon Road and St. Bernard's in Sussex Road had equally respectable records.

No records of local suffrage societies survive as such for the Portsmouth area. The minutes of the local branch of the NUWSS have been lost and little survives relating to the branch amongst the records of the NUWSS now in the Fawcett Library at the City of London Polytechnic except a testimonial presented to the local secretary, Miss Nora O'Shea. The records of the WSPU in the Museum of London are equally disappointing. A small collection of books survives in the Portsmouth City Records Office which must have constituted part of the library of the local branch of the NUWSS.[21] The titles are a poignant record of the issues which concerned their readers: *A New Conscience and an Ancient Evil* and *The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets* by Jane Adams; *Sweated Industry and the Minimum Wage* by Clementina Black; *The Status of Women under the English Law* by A. Beatrice Wallis Chapman and Mary Wallis Chapman; *Thoughts on Some Questions relating to Women, 1860–1908* by Emily Davies; *The Emancipation of English Women* by W. Lyon Blease; *Women and Labour* by Olive Schreiner and *The Soul Market* by Olive Christian Malvery. There are also several copies of Sylvia Pankhurst's *Writ on Cold Slate* being a collection of her verse and five copies of a print of an interior of a prison cell inscribed 'You have made of your prisons a temple of honour'. Scribbled inside the covers of several of these volumes is the signature of Miss Nora

O'Shea with a plea to readers to return the books when they have finished with them.

Two accounts of the activities of local suffragists survive in the Portsmouth City Records Office: Harriet Blessley's manuscript account of the great march to London by a contingent of local non-militants in July 1913[22] and Lancelot Surry's, typescript recollections of his mother's activities as a member of the local branch of the WSPU.[23] There are also a few miscellaneous pamphlets and some small items in private ownership. The major source of information is the local newspaper and it is through the pages of the *Portsmouth Evening News*, the *Hampshire Telegraph* and the *Portsmouth Times* that it is possible to reconstruct the story of the women's fight for the vote in the Portsmouth area.

All the national suffrage organisations seem to have been represented in the Portsmouth area. Young Lancelot Surry records that Portsmouth was a most important provincial centre, although there does not seem to be any evidence for his claim that the town was strongly militant. The NUWSS was the most active organisation in the area with branches in Portsmouth, Gosport, Petersfield and Chichester and was followed closely by the local branch of the WSPU. It is interesting to note though that as the NUWSS was attacked nationally for its mild, non-militant tactics, so too, it met opposition locally. Lancelot Surry recorded that his mother, Blanche, soon tired of the 'mildly constitutional methods' of the Portsmouth branch of the NUWSS and joined the local branch of the WSPU instead. The Women's Liberal Association, the Conservative and Unionist Women's Franchise Association, the British Women's Temperance Society, the Independent Labour Party, the Women's Labour League, the Portsmouth Midwives Association, the Women's Co-operative Guild, the National Union of Women Workers, the National Union of Teachers, the Women's Freedom League and the Church League for Women's Suffrage were all active in the area in the cause of women's suffrage. Lancelot Surry noted in some detail a rousing speech by the Reverend C. Hinscliff at a meeting of the Church League for Women's Suffrage:

> Women's suffrage, he said, does not mean the newest kind of ambulance to pick up and piece together humanity; it means the mainspring of national life. I think of men and women as so many power-stations where steam, water and gas are stored for release. I want to see the beneficient power of womanhood released. While we think only of Dreadnoughts (which are, of course, needed in their place) and do not insist on an equal code of morality for both sexes throughout the length and breadth of our Empire, we are unworthy to remain an Empire.[24]

There were also branches of the Women's National Anti-Suffrage League locally. The Anti-Suffrage League was formed in July 1908 in response to the challenge of the prime minister, Asquith, to suffragists to show that they had the majority of Englishwomen behind them. The organising genius of the League in the south of England was Miss Mary Anne Dickens, grand-daughter of the novelist through his eldest son. At a well-attended meeting held in St Peter's Hall in Petersfield in January 1909, a Petersfield branch was formed. Mrs Nettleship presided and by way of introducing the speaker, Miss Dickens, explained that for nearly forty years she had been involved in the women's movement and in reviewing the experience of those years, she had come to the conclusion that there was an irresistably strong argument against the granting of political power to women.[25] Miss Dickens developed this theme:

> . . . the whole of the Suffragist propaganda was based on the ignoring and defying of the fundamental differences fixed by Nature herself between the existence of men and women . . . for the nation women's suffrage would mean a huge, increased, irresponsible vote, ultimate petticoat government, and a weakening of that respect for law and order which was the very bulwark of the State.[26]

The inaugural meeting of the Portsmouth branch was held at the Sandringham Hall on 9 February 1909. In an interview with the *Hampshire Telegraph* the day before the meeting, Miss Dickens enunciated the League's philosophy.[27] She dismissed any idea that enfranchisement would raise women's wages. It was not proved. Parliament, she claimed, could be trusted to legislate on behalf of women and children 'while women continue to engage in their own sphere of social amelioration'. 'We would leave to men', she finished, 'the political rule and maintenance of this vast and complex Empire which men have created, while we women strengthen our influence in the great field of local government'. At the inaugural meeting, she urged her supporters to rally to the League. Their indifference might mean the vote being granted:

> the enemy against which they had to bring the power of their forces, was to be found, not in the person of the most militant Suffragette, but in the indifference of women themselves.[28]

For the benefit of its readers, the *Hampshire Telegraph*

published detailed extracts from the League's manifesto which contained the following gloomy prognostication that

> unless those who hold that the success of the women's suffrage movement would bring disaster upon England are prepared to take immediate and effective action, judgement may go by default, and our country drift towards a momentous revolution, both social and political, before it has realised the danger involved.[29]

The report provoked a swift response from Miss Nora O'Shea. In a crisp letter to the Editor, she argued that if women should leave Imperial affairs to their menfolk, then it was sheer hypocrisy for them to help recruit votes for those same men in their capacity as Primrose League dames, Women Liberals and Labour Women.[30] The Portsmouth branch of the NUWSS in the person of their chairman, Mrs Julia Hawksley, challenged Miss Dickens to take part in an open debate upon the subject of women's suffrage. The debate never took place since the Anti-Suffragists finally declined the invitation.

For lack of sufficient evidence, it is only possible to make generalisations, some better substantiated than others, about the social composition of the membership of the local suffrage societies. The members of the local branches of the NUWSS appear to have been drawn from the ranks of the middle classes: the sisters, wives and daughters of gentlemen of independent means or the professional classes. Others were drawn from Service backgrounds. Miss Nora O'Shea and her sister, Margaret, must have had money of their own because there is no evidence to indicate that they had to earn their livings. According to an account in the *Evening News* on 7 May 1963, Miss Nora O'Shea was 'the red-haired rebel' and Miss Margaret O'Shea was 'dark, quiet and stately'. Nevertheless it was Miss Margaret O'Shea who wrote the rousing words of the women's suffrage song 'Forward, Ever Forward':

Forward, brave and dauntless
Daughters of this earth,
Let your dormant talents
Spring to glorious birth.

Children, toiling sisters,
Cry, and never rest;
Answer! We shall help you
Coming to our best.

Forward, fighting evils,
Deborahs, awake!
Up! And help your sisters
Victims at life's stake.

The sisters' interests were not confined to the suffrage campaign. They also devoted themselves to the welfare of animals, vegetarianism and the study of herbal remedies. Their hair, universally admired by their followers, owed its magnificence to the fact that they washed it in a solution of sage and other herbs grown in their garden. Of the other members of the Portsmouth branch of the NUWSS, Mrs Lapthorn, president of the branch, was well-connected in Portsmouth business and professional circles and Mrs Hawksley was the wife of the Reverend W. Hawksley, vicar of All Saints, Landport, and a prominent figure in the local branch of the Women's Liberal Association.

Meetings of local branches of the NUWSS also attracted the wives and daughters of local minor gentry. The Conservative and Unionist Women's Franchise Association attracted a similar cross-section of the local community as the list of guests at a garden party in 1912 at Oaklands, Stakes Hill, indicates: Brigadier-General Sir Robert and Lady Colleton, Mrs and Miss Bashford of Soberton Towers, Mrs Hoare of Purbrook Park, Miss Deverell, Mrs Thistlethwayte and Mr and Mrs Hulbert of Stakes Hill Lodge.[31] The occasion of the meeting was to hear Lady Selborne speaking on the subject of the Reform Bill before the House of Commons which proposed giving universal male suffrage, and which Conservative suffragists proposed to amend with a clause giving the vote to those women who already possessed the municipal qualification. Lady Selborne urged the meeting to call upon the member for the Fareham division, Mr Arthur Lee, to support the amendment. An indefatigable speaker on behalf of the cause, Lady Selborne, wife of the second earl of Selborne, was President of the Conservative and Unionist Women's Franchise Association and a daughter of the third marquis of Salisbury, the former Conservative prime minister.[32] She lived at Blackmoor, Liss. She was no fool and did not believe in mincing words. 'The statesmanlike course for the Conservatives to adopt', she announced at Oaklands, 'was to support and carry into law a moderate measure while they could yet do it'. She continued:

> The opposition would very soon be passed, if it had not already passed. The Conservatives always had been the 'stupid' party – (laughter) – and she supposed they would go on being the stupid party, by refusing to do things which would really help their cause until it was too late . . . This would be their last chance, and if they did not take it a very much wider measure would be passed as soon as the Labour party had eaten up the Liberals, which would not be very long. Let them make no mistake, the Labour party were going to be the future Liberal party . . .[33]

The local branch of the WSPU was not as genteel as the local branches of the NUWSS or the Conservative and Unionist Women's Franchise Association. Lancelot Surry remarked that he never liked the women who belonged to it:

> The organiser was a tall young woman, of quiet, resolute bearing. She was supposed to have been a sanitary inspector before she became an advocate of the WSPU. Her photograph used to hang in our home. It bore an inscription to the effect that for the sake of women's rights she had undergone imprisonment in Holloway Gaol. I suppose she was regarded as a martyr. If so, I never met a more cold-blooded martyr.[34]

There was also a little woman with 'fishy eyes' who always spoke meekly to the organiser: 'Well, Miss, if you say I must do it, of course I must'. She turned out to be a dealer and did very well out of branch rummage sales. Another member of the branch was a stout, red-faced woman 'plainly in the movement to help along her husband's business'. He was a money-lender. If the tone of the newspaper reports is correct, meetings of the WSPU were more intense than meetings of the NUWSS and more concerned with the immediate plight of working-class working women. Speakers at branch meetings such as Miss Katherine Margesson spoke forcefully. Agitation, she insisted, was their only weapon, the Government had driven them to it; for sixty years they had tried legal and constitutional methods:

> women needed the vote to protect their position in the industrial world, to better their conditions and to give power to their Trade Unions to enforce their claims on the members of Parliament.[35]

The president of the Portsmouth branch was Mrs Cather and the secretary was Miss Peacock.[36] The local organiser, so disliked by Lancelot Surry, was Miss Charlotte Marsh.

The WSPU attracted support from other, less likely, quarters. One of their staunchest allies was the Reverend G. W. Thompson, minister of the Unitarian Church in the High Street, Portsmouth.[38] His sympathetic approach to the subject of women's suffrage brought him a large congregation of women. His sermon devoted to 'The New Reform Bill' was reported in minute detail in the *Hampshire Telegraph* in January 1913:

> . . . the present Government recognised that those who had to obey the laws ought to have a hand in choosing representatives to make them, and so they had resolved upon a Manhood Suffrage Bill. But woman had been left out of the reckoning, although it was illogical, immoral, and inhuman that she should be placed by the law in a ring which was to be the scene of her life's fight and should be called upon to obey rules and accept rewards as adequate without having any voice in the matter at all. Her claim to political equality with man was sufficiently based on her humanity alone to be unanswerable. Votes for women must come, and it would go ill with any party that witheld this measure of justice from the sex whose influence in politics was needed and would be all to the good.[39]

Mr Thompson did not confine his activities to his own pulpit. He was also an active speaker and lecturer on the women's cause in Portsmouth and the surrounding area. Another clerical ally was the Reverend E. Bruce Cornford, vicar of St. Matthew's, Southsea.[40] He was a buccaneering figure who told the crowds in the Town Hall Square in July 1913 that he did not care 'tuppence' for votes for women but wanted women to have justice and fairness. At this meeting, promoted by the WSPU and addressed by Miss Margesson, he expressed himself a warm supporter of militancy and hoped that women would contine the fight until they achieved their purpose.[41].

The only point which can be made with any certainty about the women who were active politically in the area and who fought for the cause of women's suffrage or, rather, about the movement itself locally, is that it was not working-class in its origins. Members of both the NUWSS and the WSPU in the area were anxious to improve the lot of their working-class sisters, particularly those employed in the dress trades, but there is no evidence of women or girls in local stay factories involving themselves personally in the fight.[42] The evidence in fact points to them being too preoccupied scraping a living to have time for any other pursuits.

Early references to the history of the fight for women's suffrage in the Portsmouth area are hard to find. A clue is contained in a report in the *Hampshire Telegraph* in November 1910 when, at a meeting in the Albert Hall, Portsmouth, in support of the Conciliation Bill, addressed by Laurence Housman,[43] and attended by representatives of all the local suffrage societies, Mrs Ward received a bouquet of red, white and green flowers, the colours of the NUWSS. In her eightieth year, Mrs Ward was presented with the flowers as 'a token of appreciation' of her efforts made in Portsmouth 'years ago' when she convened and conducted the first women's suffrage meeting held in the town.[44] Presumably this meeting did not take place much

before 1897 when the NUWSS was formed, particularly as the period 1884–97 was very much the nadir in the fortunes of the suffrage movement. Throughout the 1870s, the National Society for Women's Suffrage had sought to change the franchise through private members' bills and the amending of electoral reform bills. The climax to these efforts had come in 1884 when a women's suffrage amendment to the Representation of the People Bill had been defeated by 136 votes and the movement had fallen apart. The revival in the fortunes of the movement at the turn of the century with the establishment of the NUWSS which succeeded the National Society for Women's Suffrage and the beginnings of the WSPU may well have coincided with the first suffrage meeting to be held in Portsmouth.

At this time, there were still further attempts to secure reform by constitutional means. Keir Hardie[45] secured a reading for his Women's Enfranchisement Bill in March 1905, in support of which the NUWSS held a large meeting in the Queen's Hall in London and the Pankhursts embarked on an exhaustive lecture tour of the north of England. On the day of its second reading, however, the fiercely anti-suffrage Member of Parliament, Henry Labouchere,[46] took the floor and the bill was talked out. Christabel Pankhurst was convinced now that nothing less than militant action would convince politicians of the validity of the cause. As in 1884, constitutional methods were not enough. At a Liberal Party meeting in Manchester Free Trade Hall addressed by Sir Edward Grey[47] and Winston Churchill,[48] Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney[49] staged their first public demonstration. Imprisonment followed. Militancy was news and the membership of the WSPU grew. A basic pattern was established: preplanned militant tactics led to imprisonment and martyrdom. Extensive newspaper coverage provided splendid free publicity which, in its turn, led to increased membership and more funds.

The WSPU never supplanted the NUWSS which continued to adhere strictly to constitutional and legal actions but by adopting militant tactics, the story of the fight for the vote nationally became the story of the militant body and it is the Pankhursts whom people remember, not the non-militant members of the NUWSS. The history of the fight for the vote in the regions may be a different story though. Certainly, research for this paper has demonstrated that local branches of the NUWSS were more active than the national picture would seem to indicate. However, to put the activities of local suffragists in context, it is necessary to look at them against the background of the WSPU nationally.

Until 1905, the WSPU was tied very much to northern Labour politics. However, the movement began to break away and, in 1906, it moved to London. The *Daily Mail* coined the word 'suffragette' that January to denote a militant suffragist. The first public meeting was held in February at the Caxton Hall, timed to coincide with the King's speech. When it became apparent that there was nothing in the Government's programme on women's enfranchisement, the meeting marched to Westminster. The demonstrators secured a gratifying amount of publicity and more new members, the most important of which were Mrs Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence[50] who became treasurer of the WSPU and her husband, Frederick. Between them, they established the WSPU on a sure administrative and financial footing. The first large open-air women's suffrage meeting was held in Trafalgar Square on 19 May. Regular heckling of anti-suffragist cabinet ministers began in June, most notably of Asquith,[51] Chancellor of the Exchequer, and in September, the London headquarters of the WSPU was established at Clement's Inn. On 23 October a demonstration took place in the lobby of the House of Commons following the opening of Parliament. Ten arrests were made and all chose to go to prison rather than pay the fines. This incident brought the WSPU more sympathy and funds than ever before. New members flocked to join and the sentences meted out to the offending demonstrators provoked a public outcry. Only half the sentences were in fact served and the women emerged from their incarceration to attend a testimonial banquet at the Savoy Hotel. A groundswell of support for the organisation now came from the educated and well-to-do and, for the mo-

Votes for Women poster. Museum of London.

ment, united women of all political sympathies and social classes in the fight.

The year 1907 was one of rapid growth. By the end of August well over seventy branches of the WSPU had been established in the provinces. The year also saw a marked increase in the frequency and size of demonstrations. On 13 February 400 women marched to Westminster, having passed a resolution condemning the omission of women's suffrage from the King's speech. On 20 March a similar procession made its way to the House of Commons following the defeat of W. H. Dickinson's[52] private member's bill. The procession was met by a force of 500 constables at the Commons and in the ensuing confusion 74 women were arrested. However, some measure of the militants' success can be gauged from the fact that, for the first time, the debate on the bill was more serious than such debates had been hitherto. *Votes for Women*, the official organ of the WSPU, was published for the first time in September.

Mrs. Drummond[53] and four other women chained themselves to the railings of 10, Downing Street in January 1908. The Editor of the *Hampshire Telegraph* deplored these 'unwomanly tactics' but conceded that the women had a case since they had been led to expect redress from the Government and that redress was still as far off as ever. Men, he said, would demonstrate given similar provocation 'not perhaps as noisily, but with quite as much persistence'. He continued, presciently,

> These women are in deadly earnest, or they would not submit to the ridicule, opprobrium and imprisonment to which their agitation leads, and if the Government wish to put an end to such pitiable exhibitions as that of Downing Street yesterday they should give an undertaking that the just demands of the women shall be met.[54]

Fifty-four women were arrested on 11 February following the now familiar march from Caxton Hall to the Houses of Parliament, after the Government's failure to include women's suffrage in its programme. Forty-eight of them, including, for the first time, Mrs. Pankhurst, received two months' imprisonment. A letter to the Editor appeared in the *Hampshire Telegraph* from 'Vincit Veritas'. The writer admitted that the methods employed by the women were not edifying but he sympathised with them. He reviewed the history of their movement:

> Women . . . are suffering from a sense of outraged justice . . . they ask for the right to exercise the privilege of citizenship, and they use not only the old battlecry of the Chartists, but they insist that taxation and representation should go hand in hand; they have used peaceable methods; they have agitated and they have shown they are willing to go to prison and endure the cheap sneers and ill-bred sarcasm of London magistrates. From 1870–1905 the Women's Bill for Enfranchisement has been introduced 25 times, always to meet the same fate, always to be either blocked, talked out, blocked in committee, or the day taken by the Government. Women have appealed to reason, and relied on constitutional methods, and were always met by falsehood, betrayal, prejudice and dishonourable quibbles.[55]

The writer urged no woman to hold back in the fight and argued, finally, that if all women had the courage of their convictions and came out into the open and asked for the vote, the demand would be irresistible. The *Hampshire Telegraph* was very sympathetic. It devoted a paragraph to conditions in the Third Division,[56] in particular the poor quality of the food. 'If women', the paper noted, 'are content to promulgate their principles on such a fare as this, they are evidently in earnest'.[57] Later that week the newspaper protested in an editorial at the treatment meted out to the women by the police and the magistracy.[58] It reported on 18 February that ridicule for the women and their cause was changing fast to sympathy

> due as much to the harsh treatment to which they are subjected as to the courageous manner in which they are taking their punishment.

Even those people, the report suggested, most opposed to the women's cause could not but admire women who were so deadly earnest that they were prepared to put up with

> the prison cell, the degradation of the prison dress – which is perhaps the hardest to bear – and the prison fare. These women are fighting for a principle, the justness of which has been admitted by politicians of all parties, and the sacrifices they are making are bringing to their side many who would otherwise have stood aloof.[59]

Extracts were published in this same edition of the newspaper from Mrs. Pankhurst's article which had appeared in *The Daily Telegraph* on life in prison. It was very emotive copy:

> The sun can never get in through the narrow window, with its little opaque panes and iron bars. The cell is so small and bare, and every day so changeless and uninteresting that one grows to long for the

Anti-forced feeding poster. Museum of London.

> coming of the wardress, and yet to shrink from the sharpness of her voice and the banging of the door. One grows to feel almost too tired to go through the exercise, and yet one has a yearning for the open air. The services in the chapel are the greatest break in the monotony of the days, but the singing, the sound of the organ, and the sight of one's fellow prisoners, so sad and weak and feeble, break in upon a mind not well prepared by the long hours in the silent cell, and rouse emotions that are difficult to bear.[60]

In short, the WSPU had made progress. They had brought the issue of women's suffrage to the forefront of the public consciousness and they had won the sympathy of many hitherto hostile to their cause. They had not won over everyone though. A meeting of the Portsmouth Women's Liberal Association was simultaneously dissociating itself

> from that noisy section of Suffragettes of which so much had been heard. There were Suffragists and Suffragettes . . . The former were ladies who adopted constitutional means to get votes, and the latter were those who were determined to get votes anyhow.[61]

The local branch of the NUWSS was also dissociating itself and electing to continue the fight by conventional means. A deputation led by Miss Nora O'Shea waited upon the junior member for the borough, Mr T. A. Bramsdon,[62] at his residence in Elm Grove and urged him to be in his place in the House of Commons on the day H. Y. Stanger's private member's bill[63] came up for its second reading. Miss O'Shea was anxious to impress upon him that although they were not militant, they were no less earnest. Mr Bramsdon noted with approval that they were not militant for militancy, he said, was not at all popular in the House of Commons.[64] The *Hampshire Telegraph* did not doubt this, but suggested that the militants' tactics were attracting more attention from the Government than all the resolutions of 'the more sedate members of the suffrage societies'. The women who were suffering for their political convictions, the writer argued, had brought the question more prominently and effectively before the public than years of patient agitation had succeeded in doing.[65] It was another twelve months before the *Hampshire Telegraph* began to question the wisdom of militancy. Meanwhile, the Portsmouth branch of the NUWSS continued to campaign locally for Mr Stanger's bill and the inaugural meeting took place of the Portsmouth branch of the Women's Labour League on the subject of 'sweating' and the feasibility of setting up a trade union among Portsmouth's women corset workers.[66]

Public demonstrations by all parties were a feature of the summer months. The Home Secretary, Herbert Gladstone,[67] in favour of votes for women, had seemed to indicate in the debate on Mr Stanger's bill that such demonstrations might be in order. The NUWSS organised a procession of 15,000 men and women from the Embankment to the Albert Hall. Among the marchers were Emily Davies, now nearly eighty and Elizabeth Garrett Anderson[68] who was over seventy. Members of the Women's Freedom League were also in the procession and Charlotte Despard[69] was one of the speakers. Portsmouth was represented. Members of the local branch of the NUWSS carried a banner emblazoned with Nelson's signal 'Engage the enemy more closely'. Miss Nora O'Shea informed the *Hampshire Telegraph* that it was one of their proudest moments:

> our banner was the first one unfurled. We met at Northumberland-avenue, and with the assistance of civilians and helpers, we raised our banners first. Of course we expected a lot of bitter things said to and about us, and feared that things would be thrown at us, but they were not. Of course we had a lot of good-natured chaff, but the sympathy of the men in the street was admirable . . . 'Good old Pompey', 'Well done, Portsmouth'. Such were the exclamations heard on all sides, and one Marine even saluted the banner . . .[70]

A sailor they encountered wanted to carry it but he was not allowed to do so. The *Hampshire Telegraph* was most impressed with the day's proceedings. The women are demanding rights, it stated, which cannot be much longer withheld.[71]

Emmeline Pankhurst and other leading members of the WSPU were present but took no official part in the proceedings. They were planning their own distinctive demonstration. The 'Great Shout' took place in Hyde Park on 21 June. Never had so vast a throng gathered in London to witness a parade of political forces. *The Times* put the number as high as 500,000. Some thirty special trains had brought the demonstrators in from the provinces. Many of the women sported the new suffragette colours of purple, white and green devised by Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence to distinguish them from the non-militants whose colours were red, white and green. A special train ran from Portsmouth to Waterloo stopping only once at Petersfield with between five and six hundred people on board. At Waterloo the Portsmouth contingent joined up with the party from Southampton. A London and South-Western Railway band led the procession to Trafalgar Square. Besides members of the local branch of the

WSPU, there were Portsmouth area representatives of the Women's Labour League and the Labour Party. The chief marshal of their section of the procession was Mrs Saunders, the wife of the Portsmouth Labour parliamentary candidate, Alderman W. S. Saunders of the London County Council. Most of the contingent went to Mrs Pethick-Lawrence's platform in Hyde Park, the final destination of the procession. Speeches were made by the leaders from some twenty of these platforms distributed round the park and a resolution was sent by special messenger to Asquith, now Prime Minister following the resignation of Campbell-Bannerman.[72] But Asquith was unmoved and the WSPU therefore resumed its militant tactics. The first note of censure appeared in the *Hampshire*

Telegraph on 1 July, following an account of the activities of the previous day when a demonstration led by Mrs Pankhurst and Mrs Pethick-Lawrence was broken up with considerable violence in the streets round Westminster and windows were smashed at 10, Downing Street.

This violence was not parallelled locally. For the rest of 1908, the local branch of the NUWSS devoted its energies to promoting a series of drawing room meetings in surrounding districts as part of their educational programme – and universally deplored the activities of the militants. At the annual meeting of the branch, Mrs Lapthorn claimed that the country meetings were often more successful than similar meetings in Portsmouth itself.[73] The climax to the Autumn's activities, however, was a mass meeting held on 11 November in the Town Hall, Portsmouth. It was described as one of the largest political or semi-political gatherings that had ever taken place there. All political persuasions were represented and it was standing room only. The banners that were carried in the great demonstration held in London during the summer draped the walls. On the platform were Mrs Godfrey Baring, wife of the Member of Parliament for the Isle of Wight who presided, Lady Frances Balfour,[74] a Miss Abadam, Mr and Mrs Bramsdon, a Mr John Russell, Alderman Saunders, Colonel A. R. Holbrook,[75] Miss O'Shea, the Reverend W. C. and Mrs Hawksley, other representatives of the local branches of the NUWSS and the WSPU as well as many others prominent in local affairs. The proceedings commenced with an organ recital from Miss J. Suter and a song from Miss Brimmell. Miss Gourd played a violin obligato and then the meeting got down to business. Lady Frances Balfour moved and the motion was eventually carried, that the time had now come when, in the social, educational and industrial interests both of themselves and of the community at large, women of the United Kingdom should be enfranchised on the same terms as their fellow-countrymen. It was also decided to send copies of this resolution to the Prime Minister and other cabinet ministers.[76]

As presaged in 1908, militant tactics met with increased resistance from the authorities during 1909. Hecklers were despatched from meetings with little ceremony. Liberal meetings became increasingly ticket-only affairs and marching demonstrators had to endure much buffeting from the police before any arrests were made. A march to Westminster on 29 June resulted in a considerable *mêlée* in which 3,000 police were involved and 108 women and 14 men arrested. This was the largest number of women hitherto arrested. Later that same evening a group of women began breaking windows at 10, Downing Street, the Privy Council Office, the Home Office and the Treasury. On 5 July Marion Wallace Dunlop, sentenced to one month in prison for defacing the wall of St Stephen's Hall on 24 June, began the first hunger strike. She refused all food for 91 hours and was then released. The stone throwers were convicted on 12 July. They went on hunger strike on 14 July – and six days later they were all released. Serious incidents took place throughout the late summer and autumn of 1909: the Prime Minister and members of the Government were repeatedly and constantly harassed and meetings were interrupted by stone-throwing incidents. A new policy was instituted in the autumn when seven women in Winson Green went on hunger strike: forced feeding was introduced. The *Hampshire Telegraph* reported these events and local reaction in detail. The Portsmouth branch of the NUWSS roundly condemned militancy for putting back the cause of women's suffrage and in an editorial entitled 'Suffragists and the Law', the newspaper was of the opinion that the ladies of Winson Green richly deserved their original punishment:

> They had armed themselves with hatchets, smashed windows, unroofed houses, flung slates at policemen and had committed other outrages. They deserved severer punishment than had been inflicted upon them, and there was no earthly reason for not enforcing the ordinary prison discipline when they attempted to obtain their discharge by refusing food under the erroneous assumption that the lenient measures used to the women imprisoned in London would be extended to them. There is an end to the entire administration of justice if malefactors are to be let loose from prison provided they refuse to take food . . .[77]

The newspaper also carried a full report of the visit of Christabel Pankhurst to Portsmouth during the abortive by-election campaign of 1909. Scarcely anyone at the Town Station recognised her. She assured the *Hampshire Telegraph*'s reporter that no 'extreme measures' were planned in Portsmouth and hurried away to address her meeting in the Town Hall. The meeting was packed out with an 'over-flow' of almost two thousand whom she addressed afterwards from the Town Hall steps.[78] On this occasion there was little rowdyism. A very different meeting took place at the Victoria Hall, South Hayling, on the previous Tuesday evening under the auspices of the Conservative and Unionist Women's Franchise Association when the newspaper reported that never in the history of the Island had anything been seen approaching the rowdyism that was displayed that evening. There was an audience of 300, but at the back of the hall was a large body of young men including many from Havant. When the chairwoman rose to address the meeting, uproar ensued. Trum-

pets were blown, there was loud cheering and singing and the wretched woman was quite unable to make herself heard. The gas was turned out and a mad stampede ensued for the doors whereupon the gas was turned up again. Stink bombs were released and when the ladies attempted to adjourn their meeting to a room at the back of the hall, they were thwarted. When their attackers finally seized the stage, the police intervened, and acting on their advice, the ladies were forced to abandon their meeting.[79]

Efforts were made throughout 1910 and 1911 to secure a constitutional solution to the problem of women's votes. The Liberals had been returned to power at the general election in January 1910 without an overall majority. A Conciliation Committee was formed to promote a suffrage bill and Mrs Pankhurst therefore announced a cessation of hostilities pending a satisfactory outcome of the committee's deliberations. The Bill to extend the Parliamentary Franchise to Women Occupiers was deliberately narrow to placate the Tories but the suffrage societies supported it. Their faith was misplaced. The Bill was referred to a committee of the whole house on its second reading – and it was granted no further time in that session. The *Hampshire Telegraph* spoke for many people when it suggested in its editorial:

> that the shelving of the attempt to discover a via medium out of a certainly controversial problem is due rather to party objects and a personal desire to stifle conscience than on its merits. Naturally the Suffragettes and their supporters are wild with indignation, and we shall hear from them again.[80]

The militants bided their time. They waited to see whether the Government would grant facilities for the Bill in the new session in the autumn. The highlight of the summer locally was the garden party at the Cosham home of the Misses O'Shea organised by the Portsmouth branch of the NUWSS. There were teas and stalls and the Cosham Infants' School sang action songs, drilled and gave a display of dumb-bell ringing. The grounds of the house were lit by fairy lamps in the evening and entertainment was provided by Kaffir Minstrels. Throughout the day, an orchestra played selections.[81]

Meetings were organised locally in the autumn in support of the Conciliation Bill. It was reported on 4 November that the meeting had taken place at the Albert Hall in Portsmouth at which the main speaker was Laurence Housman. Many of the audience wore suffrage sashes and the banners of a number of suffrage societies in the south of England decorated the platform. Organised by the Portsmouth branch of the NUWSS on the occasion of the visit of the Surrey, Sussex and Hampshire Federation Committee to Portsmouth, the meeting was supported by the WSPU, the Women's Freedom League and the Men's Freedom League. Representatives were also in attendance from the local branch of the Women's Temperance Society, the Independent Labour Party, the Women's Labour League, the Portsmouth Midwives' Association, the Women's Co-operative, the Portsmouth Women's Liberal Association and the National Union of Women Workers.[82] A few weeks later, Frederick Pethick-Lawrence addressed another meeting at the Albert Hall in support of the bill, organised this time by the local branch of the WSPU.[83]

Parliament reassembled on 18 November. There was no reference to the Conciliation Bill. Once they learnt this, a deputation of 300 women set out for the House of Commons. They tried to rush the police who behaved with unexpected brutality. After a struggle of some six hours, 115 women and four men had been arrested. The brutality of 'Black Friday' as it became known thereafter was a major *cause célèbre*. The 'Battle of Downing Street' took place a few days later. Asquith pledged facilities for the bill in the next parliament on 22 November although not necessarily in the next session. Enraged, 200 women marched the following day to Downing Street where a fierce struggle took place. Windows were broken and 159 women were arrested. This was a week of isolated violence however. The truce was renewed when suffragist Members of Parliament sponsored a new Conciliation Bill. There was widespread support for the measure. Eighty-six town councils resolved their support and the women's hopes soared, only to be dashed. As before, party objects won the day. By September 1911 Lloyd George[84] was certainly working against the measure, convinced that the Bill would hand many thousands of votes over to the Conservatives. A survey of Liberal agents in the regions seemed to confirm his worst fears. Asquith finally undermined the whole project with his Manhood Suffrage Bill to be so drafted that it could be amended, if the Commons so wished, to include the enfranchisement of women. He claimed that his legislative proposals would not affect the chances of the Conciliation Bill but to all intents and purposes, it was effectively torpedoed. Conciliation was over. Mass window-breaking took place in London on 21 November. Windows were smashed at the Home Office, Local Government Board, Treasury, Scottish Educational Office, Somerset House, National Liberal Federation, Guards' Club, several hotels, the *Daily Mail* and *Daily News*, Swan and Edgar's, Dunn's hat shop and numerous other smaller businesses. As far as the militants were concerned, a two-year truce and attempts at conciliation had failed. That the Conciliation Bill was to be read again in the next session was no longer of interest. The militants

The Great Non-Militant March, July 1913. The marchers prepare to leave the Town Hall Square, 17 July 1913. Portsmouth City Records Office.

did not think that it had any chance of succeeding.

This was not the general concensus of opinion. At a meeting organised in Portsmouth by the local branch of the NUWSS to look at what was being offered women under the proposed Government Bill, speakers advocated taking what was on offer and then capitalising on this, 'the thin edge of the wedge'.[85] At a meeting held a few days later, Miss Nora O'Shea announced that the branch proposed holding meetings in all the Portsmouth municipal wards during the next three months in support of the Conciliation Bill which they did not regard as yet lost.[86] These meetings took place throughout February and March. Lady Selborne was a prominent speaker. Other speakers included Mrs. Phillip Snowden.[87] It was not easy. The militants' attacks on private property were fast alienating public opinion. The press reaction was swift. *The Times* deplored behaviour 'thoroughly calculated to discredit the suffragist cause'.[88] *The Manchester Guardian* declared that the women were doing more to degrade and hinder their cause than advance it.[89] The *Hampshire Telegraph* was equally condemnatory, declaring that

> the campaign of wanton destruction and wilful damage which has characterised the actions of the militant suffragists during the last few days, has amazed and disgusted even their own friends. What possible object can be served by such abominable conduct cannot be conceived, and surely in the calmer moments which are being prepared for the suffragette leaders they will reflect upon the folly of such undertakings. The 'Votes for Women' movement is rapidly developing into one of first magnitude and will have to be faced in all seriousness by the legislature before long; but such conduct on the part of its prominent leaders as has been witnessed this week has alienated the sympathy of not a few who would otherwise give it their hearty support.[90]

Lady Selborne put the matter more succinctly and felicitously at a meeting in the Town Hall, Portsmouth, reported in the *Hampshire Telegraph* on 15 March when she declared that 'a good many people, previously favourable to the movement, were now gathering their skirts together and running away from it'. The Pethick-Lawrences and Mrs Pankhurst were arrested meanwhile on charges of conspiracy. Christabel Pankhurst escaped to France. The hearing into the conspiracy charges coincided with the second reading of the Conciliation Bill. It was lost although by only fourteen votes. The Pethick-Lawrences and Mrs Pankhurst were committed for trial. The trial opened on 15 May. The movement recovered some of the public sympathy which it had lost. Lancelot Surry's father had said that if Christabel Pankhurst had come to his house to avoid arrest, he would have done his best to have hidden her.[91] The defendants were all found guilty but the jury recommended leniency and when Mrs Pankhurst and the Pethick-Lawrences were sentenced to nine months in the Second Division, the public out-cry was such that on 10 June they were transferred to the First Division. The inevitable hunger strike began on 19 June of all WSPU prisoners including the leaders. Forced feeding began three days later. However, by 6 July all the hunger-strikers had been freed, 45 women being released before the expiry of their sentences. In the wake of the conspiracy trial, the Pethick-Lawrences counselled caution and advocated consolidating the sympathy engendered by the trial but Christabel Pankhurst, from her refuge in France, determined to continue the campaign of militancy. The first serious attempt at arson was made on 13 July at Nuneham House, home of Lewis Harcourt,[92] Secretary for the Colonies. On 18 July, in Dublin, Mary Leigh threw a hatchet into a carriage in which Asquith was riding. Eluding arrest, she tried to set fire to the Theatre Royal later that evening.

There was a lull in militancy in January 1913 during the debates on the Manhood Suffrage Bill. Mrs Pankhurst felt that there was little chance of the women's suffrage amendments being carried, but agreed to the truce. For the previous six months, local suffragists had been campaigning for the amendments. Lady Selborne and the local branch of the Conservative and Unionist Women's Franchise Association had called upon Mr. Arthur Lea, the member for the Fareham Division, to support the amendment admitting those women possessing the municipal vote to the parliamentary franchise.[93] A large deputation led by Lady Selborne and representing women's suffrage societies in the Petersfield Division had waited upon their member, Mr. W. G. Nicholson, and had appealed to him to vote for one of the amendments.[94] At a meeting in the Town Hall Square, Portsmouth, organised by the NUWSS, a resolution was put and carried by the crowd:

> That this meeting calls upon the Members of Parliament for the Borough of Portsmouth to vote for the deletion of the word 'male' from the Franchise Bill . . .[95]

From his pulpit in the High Street Unitarian Chapel, the Reverend G. W. Thompson urged his congregation to pray that the Government, and especially the Prime Minister, might have wisdom when the matter came to be debated in Parliament – and added that he was prepared, if desired, to lend his church for the purpose of such prayer.[96]

It was all of no avail. The Speaker ruled on 23 January that the insertion of the women's suffrage amendment clauses so altered the Bill as to necessitate its withdrawal. The WSPU was beside itself with rage and the destruction campaign began again in earnest. In the following weeks, slogans were daubed on buildings and burned into putting greens, telegraph and telephone lines were cut, windows were smashed in London clubs, an orchid house was burned down in Kew Gardens and the restaurant house in Regent's Park was destroyed by fire. Most of the culprits escaped, but the WSPU leaders made no secret of their ultimate responsibility. Public and press reaction was now overwhelmingly hostile. Mrs. Pankhurst was arrested on 24 February for procuring and inciting women to commit offences contrary to the Malicious Injuries to Property Act 1861. She was sentenced to three years' penal servitude on 2 April. Throughout March the campaign of destruction continued and opposition to the women became more violent. Their meetings were broken up by hostile crowds and individuals were attacked in the streets. The *Hampshire Telegraph* was convinced that if only the women would put an end to the violence, they would probably achieve what they wanted in a very short time.[97] It urged the Home Office to adopt stern measures – and not to be afraid to carry them into effect.[98] It welcomed the introduction of the Prisoners' Temporary Discharge for Ill-Health Act. The 'Cat and Mouse' Act, as it soon became known, allowed prisoners who had damaged their own health through their conduct by going on hunger strike to be temporarily released to recover and then be re-imprisoned to continue serving their sentences:

> The Government have at last decided to adopt stern measures, and now that a commencement has been made along lines which should have been adopted long ago, the last phase of the violent militant campaign has been entered upon. The best spirit of the women in the country welcomes this, and with the gradual dropping of foolish and wicked methods, women's suffrage will possess a greater chance of ultimately becoming law.[99]

The *Hampshire Telegraph* was over optimistic. Repression had no effect on the arson campaign. The estimated value of the damage done to property rose dramatically in the months March to June to a total of £111,585 and on 4 June Emily Wilding Davison threw herself under the King's horse at Epsom during the 1913 Derby in the most spectacular demonstration yet devised. The first act of militancy in Portsmouth in support of women's suffrage was reported in June when Frederick Blessley, a 'well-known speaker on behalf of "the cause" ' was charged with smashing a pane of glass worth 12*s*. 0*d*. in the Town Hall. When asked by the bench what he had to say, he replied:

> Well, you see, for some time I have been very much interested in the question of women's votes, and, as the Court know, the warfare and militancy that women are going in for is very largely a question of breaking windows. It is rather a piffling, idiotic way of going about it, I admit.

The bench 'without comment' ordered him to pay £1 12*s*. 6*d*. for the broken pane, 5*s*. 6*d*. costs and 2*s*. 6*d*. fine. It was all paid.[100]

The arson campaign continued throughout the summer, with only a brief respite during the holiday months of July and August. Some measure of the strength of public opposition to militancy can be gauged from the diary of Harriet Blessley, sister of Frederick, who took part in July 1913 in the great march to London, 'the object of which was to show that the non-militants were as anxious to receive political recognition as the militants'.[101] Her diary is a rare and unique record in which the reader learns some-

thing not only of the courage of the women who took part in the march but also something of the crusading fervour which motivated them. It is clear that for Harriet, the daughter of a Portsmouth business man, the march assumed the proportions of a spiritual and moral crusade or pilgrimage. The Portsmouth contingent left the Town Hall Square at 5 p.m. on 17 July:

> Marched off round back of Town Hall to front, and up the road. Hot and smelly. Hemmed in with back streeters and boys running in between police. Band played march to suit masculine strides; had hard job to keep up . . . A cheer or two and one tomatoe (sic) on my hat. Reach boundary. Police leave us. March some distance unescorted. Cosham police (three) take charge outside Cosham. Inhabitants excited and displeased. ('Go home and mend your stockings!' 'Where's Mrs. Pankhurst?') 'You'll drop dead before you reach London!' Reach field adjoining Miss O'Shea's house. Blessed green grass and rest! Labour Party strong. Revd Thompson spoke to crowd outside hedge. Sang! Three cheers for Cause, Labour Party and Pilgrims.[102]

At Petersfield there were, in the words of the *Hampshire Telegraph*, 'unparalleled scenes'.[103] Harriet was caught up in the thick of it:

> Meeting in Market Square at 8.15 p.m. Chair taken by Vicar, who it appears is very unpopular. Crowd won't listen. Cannot convince them we are not militant. Miss O'Shea speaks, but shouting and hissing prevent her being heard . . . Labour man tries his hand . . . No avail. Miss O'Shea asks for literature. Not having enough 'Protests againsts Militancy', I go to wagonette in stable at end of High Street to get some more. Come back and find meeting dispersing. Cannot find my party or hostess. Run into a hooligan crowd, who try to snatch my collecting box and leaflets. Policeman comes to my rescue, and escorts me through crowd to the Hotel . . . Crowd follows and waits outside. My hostess joins me, and we wait inside, till crowd disperses, and sneak out with colours down. I feel a coward. Feel more firmly non-militant, seeing the fierce animosity caused by the militants.

The following day, 19 July, the party reached Haslemere. At Liphook, where they had lunched, Lady Selborne addressed them, 'rather badly' in Harriet's opinion. She felt 'like a real pilgrim going to a Holy Shrine' in the Market Square in Haslemere. The ignorance and prejudice of the crowd, she wrote, was 'intolerable':

> When we are not militant they accuse us of being wealthy and leisured women who want to get power.

There was more trouble at Guildford:

> Enormous crowd . . . Booing and jeering. Go round selling 'Common Cause', and distribute leaflets. Many people annoyed who want to listen but hooligans prevent . . . Feel so wild with stupid crowd. Police rush in and bundle off a party. After that a little quiet, and a few words got in. Corner of crowd gets angry. Police surround wagonette, Crowd surges forward. Women faint . . . Police advise speakers to stop, which they reluctantly do . . . The old story – we are taken for militants. It is difficult to feel a holy pilgrim when one is called a brazen hussy.

Sheltering from the rain in the porch of an inn near Cobham, Harriet and her companion were amused to hear the landlord discussing them:

> Racing all over the country – what's their poor wretched men doin' of? We tell him what we tell

The Great Non-Militant March, July 1913. The procession passes Charles Dickens' birthplace, 17 July 1913. Portsmouth City Records Office.

people a hundred times a day – that we are not militant, and ask him to read a leaflet and see what we really *do* believe, but he turns purple with rage and flings our leaflet to the ground.

Harriet was pleased to note that at least the nearer they got to London, 'the more intelligent and tolerant the crowd'. Crossing Hammersmith Bridge, they were much heartened by a cry of 'Stick to it, Girls!'. At Kensington Town Hall, they were welcomed by Mrs Fawcett 'looking like a superior charwoman'. On the following day, 26 July, the march culminated in a great rally in Hyde Park. There were nineteen platforms. The Surrey, Sussex and Hampshire platform was chaired by Miss Nora O'Shea. Harriet and her friend sought out Mrs Phillip Snowden, 'my favourite of favourite speakers' and listened to her 'impassioned, grand little speech'. They also heard W. H. Dickenson. There were over 40,000 people there. 'I do hope', Harriet wrote, 'that "Morning Post" man is here who called our effort "Feeble!" '.

The march was most certainly not feeble but, as Harriet discovered, little could convince the rank and file public that they were not militants whose campaign was doing more now to damage than promote the cause of votes for women. This did not deter the arsonists though. The estimated value of the damage done to property between September and December 1913 was £125,990. An unoccupied house at Bramshott, the property of Mr Theodore McKenna, brother of the Home Secretary, Mr Reginald McKenna, was burnt down in October. Suffragette literature was found in the grounds with a note:

> McKenna, coward, very brave in torturing women, but afraid to touch men. A protest against forcible feeding.[104]

At the end of December there was a serious fire in the Dockyard. The Semaphore Tower collapsed, the Rigging House and Sail Loft were gutted and two signal men lost. There were strong rumours circulating locally that the fire was the work of the militants. The *Hampshire Telegraph* reported that 'it is even said that some little time ago a letter was received from the women's militant organisation threatening such an outbreak'.[105] The rumours were never substantiated however. According to the authorities, the fire was due to the fusing of electric wires – and the idea that women could even have gained access to the Dockyard was firmly discounted.

There was a lull in militancy in January 1914 but the value of property destroyed in February was the highest monthly total ever: approximately £63,000 worth was destroyed. The policy of the WSPU was now alienating many hitherto loyal supporters. Sylvia Pankhurst and the East London Federation began a separate existence of their own in January and, in February, a number of the WSPU's most influential upper middle-class supporters established a new organisation: the United Suffragists. In Portsmouth, though, local suffragists were still working hard to promote their cause through meetings and guest speakers. At a meeting organised by the local branch of the Women's Freedom League, the Reverend G. W. Thompson proposed that a resolution be put calling upon the Prime Minister to introduce a Government measure granting votes for women without delay. Political status and power, he argued, had always been recognised as vital by people awake to the possibilities and interests of life and women now realised that good could only be accomplished for their sex by the power of the vote.[106]

It was extremely difficult now even to put the non-militant case before the exasperated public. Between March and July 1914, approximately £116,000 of additional damage was done by the arsonists. There were more large demonstrations, most notably that outside Buckingham Palace on 21 May when numerous arrests were made. The slashing of Velasquez's Rokeby Venus at the National Gallery was followed by a spate of similar attacks on museum collections. By the end of May, the National Gallery, the Tate and the Wallace Collection were all closed until further notice. The *Hampshire Telegraph* summed up the feelings of its readers in a swingeing editorial written after the news of the damage to the Rokeby Venus was made public:

> The completely senseless damaging of a nation's art treasure can do nothing other than create in the minds of reasonable people contempt for the individual concerned, and for the form of reasoning which has given rise to the utterly unconstitutional and criminal practices which have lately become all too frequent, without helping the cause of woman's suffrage one iota. 'Woman is the lesser man', said Tennyson; very much the lesser, when conduct such as this is considered! and the methods of the militant suffragists are certainly doing much to confirm the judgement of Goldsmith that "Women are confined within the narrow limits of domestic assiduity, and when they stray beyond them they move beyond their own sphere, and consequently without grace". It needs the pen of Thackeray to adequately express the contempt that such an act as the slashing of the Rokeby Venus arouses in the public mind, and it is a pity indeed that a good cause should be so hindered by such unworthy methods.[107]

The Great Non-Militant March, July 1913. Passing through Petersfield, 18 July 1913. Portsmouth City Records Office.

Open-air meetings of local suffragists were broken up by irate crowds. At a meeting in St James's Square, Newport, a hostile crowd shouted, booed and sang to drown the words of the four suffragists trying to address a small crowd of sympathisers. Police had to surround the women for their own protection. They were shepherded into the *Bugle* yard entrance into which they disappeared and were afterwards driven away in a cab to Carisbrooke. Meanwhile, the crowd 'were rather menacing' and tried to force the door of the *Bugle* yard.[108] Meetings organised by the Women's Freedom League in Portsmouth in the Town Hall Square and on the Common during Royal Counties Show Week were similarly 'rough-housed'.[109]

However, by now the militant campaign had been overshadowed by the Ulster crisis.[110] The policies of the WSPU had failed palpably to win the vote and the movement was falling apart. There is little doubt that the outbreak of war on 4 August 1914 was a blessing for the WSPU and its leaders. They had manoeuvred themselves into an impossible situation. They had alienated not only those politicians hitherto sympathetic to their cause but many of their own members and, of course, had played straight into the hands of the die-hard anti-suffragists. The 1914–18 War gave the women an opportunity to prove to doubters that they were able to do the work of men. The war had an immediate and devastating effect on one section of the local community, the corset workers. The *Hampshire Telegraph* carried a report on the 21 August on the plight of the women brought about by the shortage of orders. Semi-starvation faced many of them. At one branch factory of a large firm, five piece-workers, young women, had only one hour's work on the day the reporter made his inquiries. The women's pay that week would be 1*s*. 9*d*. or 2*s*. 0*d*. each, and they did not know how they would live.[111] At a meeting of the Civilian Sub-committee of the Executive Committee of the National Relief Fund held the following week, Mr H. R. Pink[112] suggested that some employers whose hands were being called up might, in suitable cases, employ corset girls. Sir John Brickwood[113] reported that his firm had engaged thirty-two girls to take the place of young men who had gone off to the war. 'It was the first time they had ever employed female labour . . .', he said.[114] In the ensuing weeks, as men enlisted, more women were recruited to take over their work, hitherto considered to be beyond women's strength and ability. Nowhere was this more obvious than in the Dockyard where women took their place beside men. The work was hard and onerous and the equipment was heavy and cumbersome. At first, the women had to take considerable abuse from their male companions. Many of them faced taunts, hustling and pushing on their way to work and one woman recalled, many years later, that it was as well to carry an umbrella with you on the trams 'to give as good as you received'.[115]

By 1917, it was impossible to deny the women's claim to the vote. Asquith, once the intransigent opponent of women's suffrage, rose to his feet in the House of Commons on 28 March:

> I think, he said, that some time ago I ventured to use the expression, 'Let the women work out their own salvation'. Well, Sir, they have carried it out during this War. How could we have carried on the War without them? Short of actually bearing arms in the field, there is hardly a service which has contributed or is contributing to the maintenance of our cause in which women have not been at least as active and efficient as men, and wherever we turn we see them doing . . . work which three years ago would have been regarded as falling exclusively within the province of men . . . I . . . believe . . . that some measure of women's suffrage should be conferred.[116]

The Representation of the People Act received the Royal Assent on 6 February 1918. Women aged thirty and over who were householders, the wives of householders, occupiers of property of £5 or more annual value or university graduates were enfranchised. In Portsmouth, 45,000 women became entitled to vote.

The first conclusion to be drawn from this study is that local suffragist activity gives the lie to the notion that all suffragists were militant. There was little or no militancy in Portsmouth and South-East Hampshire. Certainly no outrages were committed in this area. In fact, it seems from newspaper accounts that the majority of local activists were appalled by the excesses of the militants. Of suffrage organisations, the most active was the NUWSS and not the WSPU which is associated traditionally with the story of the women's fight for the vote. It is also clear that there were other organisations and associations fighting both for and against the cause in the area. The ways in which the women set about achieving their ends were not remarkable by present standards but at the time it was most unusual for women to form exclusive organisations and tackle anything quite so single-mindedly. They called public meetings, lobbied local Members of Parliament, spoke on street corners, sold suffrage literature and marched. The Portsmouth branch of the NUWSS seems to have been best organised. It even had its own headquarters by November 1913 when two rooms were opened officially as headquarters at 2, Kent Road, Southsea.[117] Fundraising was accomplished through jumble sales, sales of work and collections made at public meetings and in the streets.

Lancelot Surry recalled a memorable cake and candy sale organised by the WSPU to which his mother sent a cake iced in purple, green and white. Sadly, no-one would buy it, so it was raffled.[118] The only individuals who come to life in the surviving records are the indefatigable Miss Nora O'Shea, the doughty Lady Selborne and, of course, Harriet Blessley. The members of the WSPU are shadowy figures, little more than names. The influence of Miss Nora O'Shea should not be underestimated. Time and again, she features in the pages of the newspapers: calling meetings, addressing groups, organising fundraising activities, heading deputations and leading her followers on the march. There is little doubt that she and other local women displayed considerable administrative skill.

Of the strength of their organisations and the influence which they were able to bring to bear on the national stage, it is difficult to draw any conclusions at all for, despite the efforts of militants and non-militants alike, both locally and nationally, women's suffrage had made no progress at all before the outbreak of war. All that can be said with any certainty, is that the non-militant organisation, the NUWSS, played a far more active part in the campaign for women's votes in the Portsmouth area than has been supposed previously. For lack of evidence, it is equally difficult to say whether Portsmouth was a typical provincial centre. Lancelot Surry stated that 'our town had . . . become an important provincial centre for militant activities and the Branch was very strong numerically'.[119] Unfortunately, there is little evidence to support his claims. There is no doubt that conditions in the town should have made it very fertile territory for the suffrage societies. It was described in 1913 as 'the worst sweated town in the three kingdoms'.[120] When war broke out in 1914, plans were well in hand to hold a huge protest meeting against the alleged 'sweating' of Portsmouth female employees. There was also a strong tradition of female independence in a community used to their menfolk spending long periods away from home at sea or serving with the army abroad. There is no evidence, however, to indicate that these factors had any profound effect at all on the fight for women's votes in the Portsmouth area. So little work has been done on the fight for the vote in the regions that it is not even possible to compare Portsmouth with other, similar, towns in the south of England. We can be sure of one thing though. Portsmouth women proved beyond any doubt that they could take their place beside men – in Portsmouth Dockyard – doing work previously considered beyond their strength and skills. Portsmouth was also the first town in which the new electorate voted – and a woman was returned. Miss Kate Edmonds, sponsored by the Portsmouth Women Citizens' Association,[121] was returned for St. Simon's Ward on 17 November 1918 by a majority of more than 600 votes. Although some women had been able to vote in the borough elections since 1869, they were disqualified from candidature in such elections until 1918. The first woman parliamentary candidate was not so successful. Described by the *Hampshire Telegraph* as a 'Lloyd-George in petticoats', Miss Alison Garland stood as the Labour candidate in Portsmouth South in the General Election held on 14 December 1918. She was not returned.[122]

Women have yet to make dramatic inroads into municipal or parliamentary affairs in the Portsmouth area. Miss Kate Edmonds lost her seat on Portmouth's town council in 1920. The Cooperative party put up candidates who were mainly women in local elections in Portsmouth after 1919 in alliance with Labour but of all the candidates put up between 1919 and 1945, under 4 per cent were women and no woman attained the rank of first citizen until Miss Phyllis Loe was elected Lord Mayor in 1972.[123] Portsmouth has yet to return a woman to Westminster but this is not the point. Women have now won the right to vote and to stand in municipal and parliamentary elections should they wish to do so.

REFERENCES

1 Victor Grayson (1882– not known). Won Colne Valley by-election in 1907 as an I.L.P. candidate without official support of Labour Party. Defeated January 1910. Wounded at Passchendaele 1917. Repatriated. Last known 1920.

2 *(H)ampshire (T)elegraph*, 23 Sept. 1910.

3 Emmeline Pankhurst (1858–1928). Born Manchester, eldest daughter and third child of eleven children of Robert Goulden, owner of calico, printing and bleach works. Married 1879 Richard Marsden Pankhurst, LL.D., a barrister and radical, much older than herself. She had five children, two sons one of whom died in infancy and the other as a young man and three daughters, Christabel, Sylvia and Adela.

Christabel Pankhurst (1880–1958). Refused admission as a student to Lincoln's Inn. Enrolled instead for a course at Manchester University leading to Bachelor of Laws degree. Formed WSPU 1903.

Sylvia Pankhurst (1882–1960). An artist of considerable talent, she played an active part in WSPU activities during the organisation's formative years in Lancashire. Later imprisoned and went on hunger strike. Formed a number of branches of the WSPU in the East End of London. A convinced Socialist, she attracted a large following. She broke with Christabel in 1914 and formed the East London Federation.

Adela Pankhurst (1885–1961). Gave up her job as an elementary school teacher to work for the cause in London but went to Australia before the end of the militant campaign where she settled and married a Labour M.P.

4 Millicent Fawcett (1847–1929), fifth daughter and seventh child of Newson Garrett, merchant, of Aldeburgh, Suffolk and the younger sister of Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, the pioneer of medical education for women. Married 1867 Henry Fawcett, a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, Professor of Political Economy and Radical M.P. for Brighton who had been blinded ten years before in a shooting accident. Active throughout the 1870s and 1880s in promoting the cause of women's suffrage. Presided in 1897 over the union of the London Society for Women's Suffrage with eighteen provincial societies as the NUWSS.

5 Emily Davies (1830–1921). Born Southampton, fourth child of the Reverend John Davies, D.D., rector of Gateshead. No formal education but through her brother she met Denison Maurice and was drawn into educational circles. When her father died she and her mother moved to London where she set about achieving her aim of higher education for women.

6 The Albert Hall was in Commercial Road, Landport.

7 *H.T.*, 19 Dec. 1913.

8 Maddens Hotel could be one of several places. John Madden had dining rooms at 7–29 (uneven numbers) Station Street; 7–17 Spring Street and Unicorn Road, Landport.

9 *H.T.*, 17 July 1914.

10 *H.T.*, 14 Jan. 1839. I am grateful to Mr John Webb for this reference.

11 For a more detailed account of the industries of Portsmouth, see Ray Riley, 'The Industries of Portsmouth in the Nineteenth Century', *Portsmouth Papers* 25 (Portsmouth, 1976).

12 The 'Fourth Party' was so named by *The Times* 7 September 1880 (the Irish being the Third Party). Besides Wolff, the other members of the 'Party' were Lord Randolph Churchill, A. J. Balfour and John Gorst. Dissatisfied with Sir Stafford Northcote's complacent conduct of the affairs of the Conservative Party on the floor of the Commons, they came together under the aegis of Wolff to form a 'ginger' group. Their espousal of the cause of Tory democracy enabled Churchill to gain notoriety and thus begin to lay his claim to the leadership of the Conservatives following the death of Disraeli in 1881. For more information, see Harold E. Gorst, *The Fourth Party*, (1906).

13 Gorst, *Fourth Party*, p. 239.

14 *H.T.*, 26 June 1886.

15 (P)ortsmouth (C)ity (R)ecords (O)ffice DC/Gen. Corr./F2. I am grateful to Mrs Margaret Hoad for this reference.

16 *(E)vening (N)ews*, 23 Nov. 1911.

17 *H.T.*, 14 Jan. 1909.

18 *H.T.*, 15 Jan. 1910.

19 Frederick Pethick-Lawrence (1871–1961), afterwards Lord Pethick-Lawrence. Opposed South African War. Obtained controlling interest in *The Echo* newspaper 1901 and edited it 1902–05; edited *Labour Record and Review* 1905–07, joint-editor with his wife of *Votes for Women* 1907–14. Sentenced to nine months imprisonment 1912. Labour M.P. West Leicester 1923–31 and East Edinburgh 1935–45. Financial Secretary to Treasury 1929–31, Member Indian Round Table Conference 1931, Secretary of State for India and Burma 1945–47. Married, first, 1901, Emmeline Pethick d. 1954 and, second, 1957, Helen Millar, widow of Duncan McCombie with whom both he and his first wife had been friends for over forty years since the time when she was a militant suffragist.

20 *H.T.*, 18 Nov. 1911.

21 P.C.R.O. 753A.

22 P.C.R.O. 1155A.

23 P.C.R.O. 858A.

24 Ibid.

25 *H.T.*, 27 Jan. 1909.

26 Ibid.

27 *H.T.*, 8 Feb. 1909.

28 *H.T.*, 10 Feb. 1909.

29 Ibid.

30 *H.T.*, 11 Feb. 1909.

31 *H.T.*, 12 July 1912.

32 Robert Gascoyne Cecil, third marquis of Salisbury (1830–1903), Conservative Prime Minister 1885, 1886, 1895 and 1900. Resigned 1902.

33 *H.T.*, 12 July 1912.

34 P.C.R.O. 858A.

35 *H.T.*, 19 Dec. 1913.

36 *H.T.*, 29 July 1910.

37 *H.T.*, 19 April 1912.

38 I am grateful to the present minister, the Reverend John Sturges, for this piece of information.

39 *H.T.*, 17 Jan. 1913.

40 E. Bruce Cornford (d. 1940). First and only vicar of St. Matthew's, established in a predominantly working class district of Southsea along Fawcett Road in 1896. An English Catholic nationalist, his life's energies were devoted to the building and embellishing of his church, the completion of which was celebrated in 1924.

41 *H.T.*, 18 July 1913.

42 There was a strike of women stayworkers in August 1883 over the reimposition of steam charges of 1*s*. 0*d*. a week. Several public meetings took place in support of the women, money was collected for a strike fund and committee rooms opened to deal with cases of distress but after a short period of time, the women returned to work but not before most of

the factory owners had compromised to a certain extent by reducing the steam charge to 10*d*. The steam charge covered not only the use of steam to manufacture the stays but tea, the use of sitting rooms and cleaning. For further information see *H.T.*, 11, 15, 18 and 22 Aug. 1883 and *P.T.*, 11, 15 and 18 Aug. 1883.

43 Laurence Housman (1865–1959), author and artist.

44 *H.T.*, 4 Nov. 1913.

45 James Keir Hardie (1856–1915), socialist and labour leader. First chairman of I.L.P.

46 Henry Labouchere (1831–1912), advanced Liberal in favour of disendowment and disestablishment of the Church of England and Home Rule for Ireland. M.P. for Windsor 1865–66, Middlesex 1867–68, and Northampton 1870–1906.

47 Sir Edward Grey (1862–1933), Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs 1892–95, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs 1905–16. Liberal M.P. for Berwick-on-Tweed 1885–1916 until created first viscount Grey of Falloden 1916.

48 Sir Winston Churchill (1874–1965). Under-Secretary of State for Colonies 1905–08, President of Board of Trade 1908–10, Home Secretary 1910–11, First Lord of Admirality 1911–15, Chancellor of Duchy of Lancaster 1916, Minister of Munitions 1917–19, Secretary of State for War and Air 1919–21, Secretary of State for Colonies 1921–22, Chancellor of Exchequer 1924–29, First Lord of Admiralty and Member of War Cabinet 1939–40. Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and First Lord of the Treasury 1940–45; Lord Warden of Cinque Ports 1941–65. Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury 1951–55, Minister of Defence 1951–2.

49 Annie Kenney (1879–1953), afterwards Mrs. Taylor. A cotton factory worker, she was recruited early to the ranks of the WSPU. She was an enthusiastic and devoted worker appearing on public platforms in the clogs and head shawl of a mill girl.

50 Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence (1867–1954), daughter of Henry Pethick of Weston-Super-Mare. Married Frederick Pethick-Lawrence 1901. Joint editor with her husband of *Votes for Women* 1907–14.

51 H. H. Asquith (1852–1928), a barrister. Home Secretary 1892–95, Chancellor of Exchequer 1905–08, Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury 1908–16. Resigned 1916. Liberal M.P. for East Fife 1886–1918 and Paisley 1920–24. Leader of Liberal party 1908–26. Created first Earl of Oxford and Asquith 1925.

52 W. H. Dickinson (1859–1943), a barrister. Liberal M.P. for North St. Pancras 1906–18. Joined Labour Party 1930. Member of Speaker's Conference on Electoral Reform 1916–17.

53 Mrs. Flora Drummond, a plump, pugnacious, little woman less than five feet tall. Known familiarly in the WSPU as the 'General' as a tribute to her size and manner and excellent organisational powers.

54 *H.T.*, 18 Jan. 1908.

55 *H.T.*, 14 Feb. 1908.

56 Between 1898 and 1948, a court in England sentencing an offender to imprisonment directed whether he served his sentence in the first, second or third division. The First Division was a privileged form of detention for persons guilty of seditious libel or other political offences. The Second Division was for those not of depraved or criminal habits and the Third Division was for the general body of prisoners and might be aggravated by hard labour.

57 *H.T.*, 14 Feb. 1908.

58 *H.T.*, 17 Feb. 1908.

59 *H.T.*, 18 Feb. 1908.

60 Ibid.

61 *H.T.*, 14 Feb. 1908.

62 Thomas Bramsdon (1857–1935), head of Portsmouth firm of solicitors, Messrs Bramsdon and Childs. Borough Coroner 1883–1935. Liberal M.P. for Portsmouth May–October 1900 and 1906–10 and for Portsmouth Central 1918–22 and 1923–4.

63 H. Y. Stanger (1849–1929), a barrister. Liberal M.P. for North Kensington 1906–10.

64 *H.T.*, 24 Feb. 1908.

65 Ibid.

66 *H.T.*, 28 Feb. 1908.

67 Herbert Gladstone (1854–1903), fourth son of the Liberal Prime Minister, W. E. Gladstone. A Liberal in favour of Free Trade, Home Rule for Ireland, Temperance Reform and the abolition of the veto of the House of Lords. M.P. for Leeds 1880–85 and Leeds West 1885–1910. Chief Whip 1899–1905. Home Secretary 1905–10.

68 Elizabeth Garrett, later Mrs Garrett Anderson (1836–1917), second daughter of Newson Garrett and elder sister of Millicent Fawcett. Pioneer in campaign to open the medical profession to women.

69 Charlotte Despard (1844–1939). Born Charlotte French, she was the daughter of a naval captain and elder sister of Field-Marshal Sir John French who commanded the British Expeditionary Force at the start of the 1914–18 War. Married Maximilian Despard, a merchant of Irish extraction who travelled extensively in the Far East and during their twenty years of marriage, she accompanied him on many of his trips. After his death, she determined to do what she could to serve the people of the London slums. She went to live in Nine Elms, Battersea where she served on Poor Law and Education Committees and founded a dispensary for women and children and a club for working men. She loved freedom passionately and was drawn early into the ranks of the militant suffragists.

70 *H.T.*, 15 June 1908.

71 Ibid.

72 Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman (1836–1908). Financial Secretary for War 1871–74 and 1880–82. Secretary to Admiralty 1882–84, Chief Secretary for Ireland 1884–85, Secretary of State for War 1886 (Gladstone's third administration) and again, 1892 and in 1894 when Lord Rosebery became Prime Minister to 1895 when the Ministry resigned. Leader of Liberal Opposition 1899, Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury 1905–08. A Liberal in favour of Home Rule for Ireland. M.P. for Stirling 1868–1908.

73 *H.T.*, 1 Oct. 1908.

74 Lady Frances Balfour, daughter of eighth duke of Argyll and wife of Eustace Balfour, fifth son of James Balfour of Whittingeham, East Lothian and Strathconan, co. Ross and youngest brother of A. J. Balfour.

75 Colonel A. R. Holbrook (1850–1946), son of Richard Holbrook of Southsea, newspaper proprietor. Chairman Portsmouth Conservative Association 1885–98. Commanded 3rd (Duke of Connaught's Own) V.B. Hants. Regt. 1898–1904 and R.A.S.C. Salisbury Plain District 1914–19. A Conservative. Sat for Basingstoke division of Hampshire 1920–23. Unsuccessfully contested seat December 1923. Re-elected 1924 and sat until retired 1929.

76 *H.T.*, 12 Nov. 1908.

77 *H.T.*, 2 Oct. 1909.

78 *H.T.*, 27 Nov. 1909.

79 Ibid.

80 *H.T.*, 15 July 1910.

81 *H.T.*, 23 Sept. 1910.

[82] *H.T.*, 4 Nov. 1910.
[83] *H.T.*, 18 Nov. 1910.
[84] David Lloyd George (1863–1945). Liberal M.P. for the Caernarvon Boroughs 1890–1945. Fearless advocate of Welsh causes. President of Board of Trade 1905–15, Minister of Munitions 1915–16, Secretary of State for War July 1916. Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury December 1916–22.
[85] *H.T.*, 12 Jan. 1912.
[86] *H.T.*, 19 Jan. 1912.
[87] Mrs Phillip Snowden, daughter of Richard Annakin of Harrogate. Married 1905 Phillip Snowden, chairman of the I.L.P. 1904–07 and 1917–20 and Chancellor of the Exchequer 1924 and 1929–31.
[88] *The Times*, 2 March 1912.
[89] *The Manchester Guardian*, 2 March 1912.
[90] *H.T.*, 8 March 1912.
[91] P.C.R.O. 858A.
[92] Lewis Harcourt (1863–1922), son of Sir William Harcourt. First Commissioner of Works 1905–10 and 1915–16, Secretary for the Colonies 1910–15. Ecclesiastical Commissioner 1913. A Radical. M.P. for Rossendale division of Lancashire 1904–17 when created first viscount Harcourt.
[93] *H.T.*, 12 July 1912.
[94] *H.T.*, 6 Dec. 1912.
[95] *H.T.*, 31 Jan. 1913.
[96] *H.T.*, 17 Jan. 1913.
[97] *H.T.*, 7 Feb. 1913.
[98] *H.T.*, 7 March 1913.
[99] *H.T.*, 30 May 1913.
[100] *H.T.*, 20 June 1913.
[101] *H.T.*, 18 July 1913.
[102] P.C.R.O. 1155A.
[103] *H.T.*, 25 July 1913.
[104] *H.T.*, 31 Oct. 1913.
[105] *H.T.*, 26 Dec. 1913.
[106] *H.T.*, 30 Jan. 1914.
[107] *H.T.*, 13 March 1914.
[108] *H.T.*, 17 April 1914.
[109] *H.T.*, 20 June 1914.
[110] The Liberals introduced their third Home Rule Bill in 1912. The Union was left intact and the powers of the Dublin parliament and government were very restricted but the Ulster leaders gave notice that they were prepared to resort to force if subjected to a Catholic government. The Lords delayed the bill until 1914 and in the meantime Asquith tried to conciliate Ulster. Only the outbreak of war in 1914 prevented a trial of military strength. Home Rule was delayed. When the war ended, conditions had changed dramatically as a result of the Easter Rising of 1916.
[111] *H.T.*, 21 Aug. 1914.
[112] H. R. Pink, a prominent local grocer. Elected to the Town Council 1894. Three times mayor and once lord mayor. Elected to aldermanic bench 1917.
[113] Sir John Brickwood, chairman and managing director of Brickwood and Co. Ltd., brewers, maltsters and wine and spirit merchants.
[114] *H.T.*, 28 Aug. 1914.
[115] I am grateful to Mrs Anida Rayfield for this information.
[116] *The Parliamentary Debates*, Fifth Series, House of Commons, vol. 92, 28 March 1917 House of Lords Record Office.
[117] *H.T.*, 7 Nov. 1913.
[118] P.C.R.O. 858A.
[119] Ibid.
[120] *H.T.*, 19 Dec. 1913.
[121] The surviving records of the Portsmouth Women Citizens' Association covering the years 1918–71 are deposited in the Portsmouth City Records Office P.C.R.O. 167A/3-4 and P.C.R.O. 1055A.
[122] *H.T.*, 22 Nov. 1918.
[123] For a detailed account see Gregory Ashworth, 'Portsmouth's Political Patterns 1885–1945', *Portsmouth Papers* 24 (Portsmouth, 1976).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to many people who have taken an interest in my researches for this paper in particular Miss Barbara Aylen, Mrs Celia Clark, Mrs Margaret Hoad, Miss Nora Gibbs, Mrs Mary Ray, Dr James Thomas and Mr John Webb who, between them, have encouraged me, given me references to material or put me on the track of sources. I owe a special debt of gratitude to Miss Gibbs for depositing in the Portsmouth City Records Office the diary of her mother, Miss Harriet Blessley and allowing me to quote freely from it. For permission to quote extracts from his father's diary, I must thank Mr Nigel Surry. I must also thank the Local History staff of Portsmouth Central Library who have coped patiently with my many queries and made available the back files of local newspapers. Mrs Hoad, Dr Thomas and Mr Webb kindly commented on the paper while it was still in draft form.

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